

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 GUATEM 04850 011902Z
ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6990

S E C R E T GUATEMALA 4850

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PBOR, GT, BH, UK
SUBJ: BELIZE

REF: GUATEMALA 4722, 4759, 4808

1. AFTER I HAD SPOKEN TO FOREIGN MINISTER MOLINA TODAY ON OTHER MATTERS, HE BRIEFED ME ON GOG TALKS WITH ROWLANDS BUT DID NOT GO BEYOND WHAT PRESIDENT LAUGERUD AND ROWLANDS HAD ALREADY TOLD ME. HE DID, HOWEVER, DESCRIBE HIMSELF AS QUOTE MODERATELY OPTIMISTIC UNQUOTE ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE NEGOTIATIONS.

2. MOLINA BEGAN BY SAYING THAT THERE HAD BEEN NO SPECTACULAR ADVANCE DURING THE CONVERSATIONS. THEY HAD NEVERTHELESS SUCCEEDED IN DEFUSING THE SITUATION FURTHER AND GETTING PAST THE CRITICAL STATE WHICH HAD BEEN REACHED. MOLINA EMPHASIZED AGAIN HOW IMPORTANT IT WAS FOR GUATEMALA TO HAVE THE BRITISH ASSURANCE THAT THEY WOULD NOT QUOTE SPRING INDEPENDENCE UNQUOTE ON THE GUATEMALANS. HE SAID THEY HAD COME TO BELIEVE AS A RESULT OF PRESSURE THAT HAD BEEN EXERTED ON THEM -- HE MENTIONED GRENADA AND THE COMMONWEALTH CONFERENCE -- THAT THE BRITISH WERE LEADING UP TO INDEPENDENCE.

3. MOLINA DID NOT SPECIFICALLY MENTION THE MOHO LINE BUT I

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ASSUMED HE HAD IT, OR A VARIATION OF IT, IN MIND WHEN HE SAID TO ME THAT PERHAPS SOME COMPROMISE LINE MIGHT BE POSSIBLE. HE WENT ON TO ADD, HOWEVER, THAT EVEN THE MONKEY RIVER LINE WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO SELL HERE IN GUATEMALA, AND HE DESCRIBED THE TWO SIDES' POSITIONS AS STILL FAR APART. HE CONFIRMED THAT THE GOG WAS BEGINNING TOMORROW A TELEVISION PROGRAM DESIGNED TO EDUCATE THE GUATEMALAN PUBLIC TOWARD A MORE

REALISTIC UNDERSTANDING OF THE BELIZE ISSUE. THESE PROGRAMS, HE SAID, WOULD BE AS OBJECTIVE AND IMPARTIAL AS POSSIBLE. UP UNTIL NOW, HE ADDED, THE GUATEMALA PUBLIC HAD THOUGHT THAT GUATEMALA SHOULD HAVE ALL OF BELIZE.

4. HE SAID THERE HAD BEEN NO AGREEMENT ON WITHDRAWAL OF FORCES, NOTING THAT ROWLANDS HAD SAID THAT THIS COULD ONLY COME ABOUT GRADUALLY.

5. HE CONFIRMED THAT HE WOULD BE MEETING WITH ROWLANDS IN EITHER NEW YORK OR WASHINGTON IN SEPTEMBER. HE DID NOT MENTION TO ME THE POSSIBILITY OF A NEGOTIATING TEAM GOING TO LONDON IN ADVANCE OF THAT SESSION (AS FORMER FONMIN HERRERA HAD IN HIS CONVERSATION WITH ME LAST WEEK).

6. AT THE END OF THE CONVERSATION, HE SURPRISED ME BY ASKING IF I HAD SEEN ROWLANDS DURING HIS VISIT. I SAID THAT I HAD. HE THEN ASKED ME WHAT ROWLANDS' REACTION TO HIS TALKS HERE HAD BEEN. I SAID THAT I THOUGHT ROWLANDS HAD BEEN PLEASED BY THE FACT THAT THE TALKS HAD HELPED TO FURTHER DEFUSE THE TENSION, A POINT WHICH I NOTED THE FOREIGN MINISTER HAD ALSO MADE. I SAID IT HAD ALSO SEEMED TO ME THAT ROWLANDS HAD BEEN PLEASED BY THE CORDIAL ATMOSPHERE OF HIS DISCUSSIONS WITH THE PRESIDENT AND FOREIGN MINISTER, BUT I COULD NOT SAY THAT I HAD FOUND ROWLANDS ENCOURAGED ABOUT THE SUBSTANCE OF THE NEGOTIATIONS, WHICH WAS NOT SURPRISING AS IT DID NOT
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APPEAR THAT THE SUBSTANCE HAD BEEN ADVANCED. THE FOREIGN MINISTER NODDED AGREEMENT.
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